



# Commandant's NOTE

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## The Infantry Force XXI Working Group

In my last Commandant's Note, I outlined the purpose and goals of Infantry Force XXI, using U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command (TRADOC) Pamphlet 525-5 as the Army vision of how U.S. joint military operations will be conducted in the 21st Century. I also described how we will apply the Force XXI design principles in developing the force structure we will need to sustain an Army that can compel potential aggressors to rethink their actions, deter aggression by our ability to project a credible military presence, reassure our Allies and neutral nations, and support those who turn to us for assistance. That is a tall order, and in this note, I want to discuss the Infantry Force XXI Working Group and the pivotal role it will play as we continue to restructure the force to meet the challenges of the next decade and beyond.

The missions of the working group are as diverse as the array of contingencies and missions our Army will have to face in tomorrow's world, but its primary charter is to define the Infantry structure for Force XXI, while working in concert with other agencies defining the overall structure of the Army. The organization works directly for the Chief of Infantry, and will ensure timely interface between the U.S. Army Infantry Center staff and all TRADOC staffs and training centers. Army Force XXI is an enormous undertaking, and it will demand the closest cooperation between all branches of the Army. The Experimental Force at Fort Hood, other Battle Labs across TRADOC, and all

of the branch service schools will be linked through the Infantry Working Group as contributors to this initiative.

While the future needs of the Army may not be quantifiably greater than those we have faced in the past, they will certainly be different in many aspects. Advances in weapons technology, burgeoning developments in night vision capabilities, the increased sophistication of potential adversaries, and the need for specific systems' compatibility with those of future coalition partners will demand that we remain competitive in the research and development arena. Digitization is but one of the initiatives being actively pursued and exercised; its potential for communicating operational data and ensuring commanders' situational awareness is tremendous, and we would certainly be remiss in not exploiting it to the fullest extent. It is these different needs that the working group will have to examine as it goes about its business.

The Infantry Force XXI Working Group will closely examine the organizations that we now have and weigh them against future needs. Structurally, light infantry is generally on track, but it is absolutely imperative that we leverage technology to maximize lethality while still maintaining the greatest possible degree of survivability. The challenge is to modernize, apply technology to the benefit of the fighting force, and still accomplish this within the fiscal constraints that have become reality over the last decade. The heavy force still

faces the challenge of having too few infantry dismounts; in spite of the technological gains afforded by advances in target acquisition and weapons systems, we have lost the dedicated antitank element and its firepower. In spite of the anticipated improvements in the field of infantry weapons, this means that a potential enemy will be able to concentrate his firepower on fewer targets, potentially enhancing his own lethality while placing greater demands upon our own maneuverability and survivability.

The Infantry Force XXI Working Group will further address the necessary organizational and technological issues in search of solutions to this challenge. The goal is to design an organization that has enough infantry to meet the missions of both today and the future, in a way that is both tactically sound and affordable. In doing this, we must strive to achieve that degree of digitization of both light and heavy forces that will serve as a paradigm for digitization across the Army. The extensive modernization effort that is Infantry Force XXI must focus on development of the doctrine, weapons, vehicles, force protection, night vision devices, and communications systems we will need, but only in order to achieve a clear operational advantage over the threat. We cannot afford to buy all we want, so we must identify those programs and systems that will afford us a clear technological edge, and then go after them. The working group will assist us in determining those most critical needs.

In its deliberations, the working group will also examine the impact of the missions and conditions under which the Army of the next century will have to operate. Future leaders may well have to operate in the absence of clear indicators and with only vague parameters to guide their actions. This will demand a clear understanding of higher headquarters' intent and the doctrinal principles for such situations, and an ability to render sound, reasoned judgements under pressure. Military operations of the future—as we have seen in recent history—will likely involve the close, direct fire battle, and this brings me to the most critical element of the equation: the soldier.

Whatever weapons and systems we field, the soldiers and leaders of tomorrow's Army will have to be of the highest quality our Nation can summon, and we must train, support, and retain them in sufficient numbers to ensure that when our national interests are threatened they can deploy rapidly, hit hard and fast, gain the decisive victory, and return with minimal casualties. That is our task, and it is as great a challenge as we have ever faced, but we must meet it if our Nation is to continue to exercise her role as a leader. We shall accomplish this task as the Army has met all other challenges in its history, through the combined efforts of dedicated men and women, and the Infantry Force XXI Working Group will ensure that the Infantry's contribution to Army Force XXI is a significant and lasting one.

